United Nations A/ES-10/PV.29

General Assembly
Tenth Emergency Special Session

Official Records

29th meeting
Friday, 17 November 2006, 4 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Haya Rashed Al Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 4.20 p.m.

Agenda item 5 (*continued*)

Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.19)

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): Turkey aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. I shall therefore try to be brief.

Given the increased human suffering in the Palestinian territories and the bleak prospects for the peace process, we believe that now is the time for collective reflection on where we have gone wrong. In that regard, what is transpiring in the Gaza Strip is unacceptable. The killing of innocent civilians cannot be justified by any means. We were particularly shocked by the incident that occurred in Beit Hanoun on 8 November. The images of dead women and children, who posed no military threat whatever, were truly heartbreaking.

We of course recognize Israel's right and obligation to defend its own citizens. Accordingly, we condemn the Qassam rocket attacks into Israeli territory. But we equally condemn the disproportionate use of force against civilians, which breeds nothing but more violence, hatred and insecurity. We therefore join others in calling upon Israel to immediately cease its military operations in Gaza and to bring to justice those responsible for the tragedy in Beit Hanoun. At the same time, we reiterate our appeal to the Palestinian Authority to do whatever is necessary to stop rocket attacks against innocent Israeli civilians.

In the light of the spiral of violence, it should be obvious to everyone by now that there can be no military solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The more we rely on military means, the more we diminish the chances for a lasting peace. I believe that to be the irrefutable premise on which we should build our efforts. To that end, we should first provide hope and relief to the Palestinian people. We must create the necessary conditions that will allow them to look towards the future and see reliable prospects for security, prosperity and stability. Of course, the Israeli people deserve no less. They too should be able to live in peace and security with their neighbours and reap the benefits of cooperation and stability.

The only viable way to achieve those objectives includes the resumption of meaningful negotiations between the two sides on the basis of the Quartet's Road Map, which envisages a two-State solution. We believe that the efforts of President Abbas to bring about national unity along those lines will constitute an important step in the right direction. We should therefore spare no effort to support him in that important endeavour.

Achieving a just and lasting resolution to the conflict requires courage and a bold vision on the part of both Israelis and Palestinians, as well as all countries capable of influencing the situation. Difficult though it may be, there is no other option. We should

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therefore all act responsibly and strive to put the peace process back on track without further delay.

We hope that today's meeting will serve as an alarm bell as to the urgency of the matter, and that it mobilizes all the necessary elements towards that end. For its part, Turkey, in full cooperation with all the parties concerned, will continue to make its best efforts to bring peace and stability to the region.

Mr. Sen (India): I thank you, Madam President, for reconvening the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, on a matter of grave and abiding concern to the international community: the situation in the Middle East and, in particular, the core reason for instability in that region, the question of Palestine.

We share the deep concern voiced today by many delegations at the deteriorating situation in Gaza and the recent tragic and terrible loss of life in the region. We also share the deep sense of sorrow at the tragic tale of death, destruction, injury and misery that has been visited upon so many families as the tragedy has continued to unfold over the past few months. The loss of 19 lives on 8 November at Beit Hanoun is set in the depressing context of a wider tragedy in the Middle East.

While we join other delegations in conveying our heartfelt condolences to all bereaved families at the losses they have suffered, we believe that some form of action is essential to avoid further tragedies. We have noted the announcement by the Government of Israel of an inquiry into that incident. We hope that its results will be publicized and that action will be taken swiftly against those responsible. We also note that the draft resolution that is before us in document A/ES-10/L.19 calls for a fact-finding mission to the region. We hope that the mission returns not only with a reconstruction of the events of that tragic morning but also with suggestions to avert the repetition of similar tragedies. These recent incidents only reinforce our conviction that moral courage of a very high order is needed to break the vicious circle of violence and counter-violence.

It was not long ago that the situation in the Middle East looked more promising. Just last year, we welcomed the implementation by Israel of its plan for disengagement from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. At that time India described this as a significant first step that we hoped would culminate in a mutually acceptable, negotiated settlement in accordance with the Road Map and the relevant Security Council resolutions. We also hoped that democratic elections in the Palestinian areas and the formation of a new governing coalition in Israel would stimulate a welcome resumption of the peace process, just as we hoped that all concerned would show flexibility to produce compromises that are essential to transcend rigid positions.

Tragically, the outcome was the opposite. We have watched with growing alarm as the reluctance of the international community to deal with the newly elected Palestinian Government has led to both an almost complete suspension of international assistance as well as to the withholding of Palestine's share of taxes and revenues. The resulting near-total collapse of the Palestinian economy is fuelling an already volatile situation, particularly among disaffected young people. Renewed rocket attacks and suicide bombings in Israel have led to civilian casualties. The abduction of an Israeli soldier led to disproportionate and unjustifiable massive military retaliation, besides the detention of elected Palestinian representatives and Cabinet ministers. No dialogue is possible in such circumstances. The use of force and the evisceration of countervailing power can only deepen the crisis by deepening the sense of loss.

We all agree that violence will produce no durable solution. That can come only from meaningful, sincere and results-oriented dialogue — a dialogue aimed at finding a way forward. From the very beginning, India has always advocated a peaceful settlement. To give just one example, Jawaharlal Nehru, in a note on Palestine written as early as 4 April 1948, envisaged a federation in Palestine, with fully autonomous Israeli and Palestinian units. It is in that context that we have consistently urged the resumption of direct dialogue based on the Quartet principles.

To that end, we have joined the vast majority of countries that have consistently affirmed their commitment to a negotiated two-State solution accepted by the two principals that would result in a viable, contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State existing side by side with Israel in peace and security. We have regularly reaffirmed that the Road Map, as endorsed by Security Council resolution 1515 (2003), remains the fundamental framework to resolve this bitter conflict. We support the call of the Secretary-General to consider innovative ways by all sides to fully implement the Road Map, which would lead without delay to a solution to this conflict based

on relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions.

A source of anxiety is that continuing to sow dragon's teeth would make a viable Palestinian State extremely difficult, besides creating bitterness for generations. Some simple and moving words of Edward Said, written in New York on 10 January 1992, remain pertinent: "If Israelis and Palestinians can have any decent future, it must be a common one not based on the nullification of one by the other".

We cannot but be deeply concerned by the humanitarian cost, which is often overshadowed by the larger and more gruesome headlines that violence begets. The spiral of chaos and violence has long-term implications for the stability of the entire region. We call for the adoption of urgent measures to improve the humanitarian and economic conditions of the Palestinian people. In that context, we welcome the announcement two months ago by the Quartet principals of the continuation and extension of the temporary international mechanism to provide a channel for the donor community to extend assistance directly to the Palestinian people.

We have launched our own modest efforts to help avert a larger humanitarian crisis in Palestine. Apart from earlier announcements of assistance, including a grant of $15 million announced during the visit of President Abbas to India last May, we have recently delivered the first tranche of medicines and medical supplies that formed part of an announced humanitarian assistance package worth $2 million.

In conclusion, we hope that the Quartet and all relevant regional players will work to de-escalate the situation, end the cycle of violence and counter-violence and avert the humanitarian crisis that currently faces us.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to you, Madam President, for your speedy response to the request to reconvene the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly to consider ongoing Israeli violations, the most recent of which was the Beit Hanoun massacre in Gaza. We also endorse the statements delivered by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Undoubtedly, the Security Council's failure to shoulder its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and the protection of Palestinian civilians from repeated acts of murder and aggression at the hands of the Israeli war machine as a result of the use of the veto by a member of the Security Council, even after the draft resolution had been amended, requires the General Assembly — the most democratic body of the United Nations — to send a strong message that the international community strongly disapproves of the protection provided by the Security Council to Israel despite that country's crimes and violation of international law and the commitments incumbent upon it as an occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention and other principles of international humanitarian law.

We can no longer continue to close our eyes to repeated Israeli attacks on the occupied Palestinian territories. It is unacceptable to interpret the legitimate right to self-defence as the right to kill innocent people in their sleep and to target essential Palestinian infrastructure by every military means. It is also unacceptable to claim that the incident at Beit Hanoun was a tactical error. We oppose any Israeli aggression against any Palestinian civilian, whether intentional or caused by tactical or strategic error, as the human rights of Palestinians are totally equal to Israeli human rights in all fields.

The delegation of Egypt expresses its great regret at the use of the veto against two consecutive Security Council draft resolutions aimed at protecting the human rights of Palestinians from Israeli aggression. That contradicts the new vision that we initially adopted to respect human rights in all countries without distinction. That means that the General Assembly, as the principal organ responsible for the protection and respect of human rights, must intervene through practical measures to ensure that respect and to guarantee that such acts of aggression will not be repeated in the future. This is particularly true given that experience has proved that neglecting the responsibility to maintain international peace and security risks the continuation of selectivity, politicization and double standards in dealing with issues related to human beings.

We therefore support draft resolution A/ES-10/L.19, which calls for the immediate cessation of Israeli military assaults, Israel's withdrawal from Gaza to the positions held prior to 28 June 2006, the

establishment of a fact-finding mission on the incident at Beit Hanoun and the establishment of an international mechanism for the protection of Palestinian civilians. We also emphasize the need to undertake other necessary concrete measures to stabilize the situation and to resume the peace process through the implementation of a number of confidence-building measures that will allow both parties to reach a new political horizon, and not just to announce promises and implement limited measures without finding a radical solution to the core issue by ending the occupation.

In that context, Egypt would like to underscore the importance of several measures that could help to restore confidence and lead us back to the peace process. First, as the occupying Power, Israel must fulfil its responsibilities and duties under the Fourth Geneva Convention. That includes refraining from targeting civilians and from all the forms of violence and collective punishment that it practices, which are flagrant and repeated violations of the human rights of Palestinians living under occupation and which also constitute crimes punishable under international law, and under criminal, civil and international human rights law. In addition, a standing international monitoring mechanism between the Palestinians and the Israelis must be established to ensure that such violations are not repeated.

Secondly, Israel must lift its blockade against the Palestinian people and take swift action to address the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and the West Bank. Israel must also cease its construction of the separation wall and resume compliance with the Agreement on Movement and Access, implementing its provisions to facilitate the movement of Palestinians and allowing them to receive humanitarian assistance, especially through the Rafah border crossing, which should be reopened permanently.

Thirdly, the international community, through the United Nations and its constituent bodies, must move away from the policy of double standards in dealing with the question of Palestine. The Security Council must assume its abandoned responsibility to protect Palestinian civilians. It must also end its silence in the face of the human rights violations perpetrated by the occupying Power in the occupied Palestinian territories by dispatching a fact-finding mission to investigate Israeli violations and to determine criminal and civilian responsibility for the effects on the Palestinian people of repeated Israeli aggression.

Fourthly, we must establish the appropriate environment for the resumption of negotiations through the release both of the abducted Israeli soldier and of Palestinian prisoners, as well as the immediate release of the Palestinian ministers, parliamentarians and officials detained by Israel. Israel must also cease its military operations, in parallel with a halt by the Palestinian side to the launching of rockets into Israel from Palestinian territory; this must take place under international supervision.

Fifthly, all relevant international actors, and in particular the members of the Quartet, must act immediately to bring both Palestinians and Israelis back to the negotiating table. They must also take effective steps to address the question of Palestine in all its dimensions through final-status negotiations, as was requested by Arab Foreign Ministers during the special meeting of the Security Council held on 21 September 2006 (see S/PV.5530). That would be the best approach to achieve a just peace on the basis of a two-State solution ensuring the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in security, peace and stability.

In order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, Egypt welcomes all creative and innovative initiatives based on a sincere desire to reach such a peace without allowing the interests of one party to prevail over those of the other. That would result in the realization of international legitimacy based on justice, equality and respect for international law.

In order to achieve such justice, we look forward to speedy action by the Fifth Committee, before the end of today's debate. We also hope that the draft resolution before the Assembly will be adopted at today's meeting. We have waited for it for too long.

Mr. Bolton (United States of America): Just yesterday, the Third Committee adopted a draft resolution that stressed the need to avoid politically motivated and biased country-specific human rights resolutions. It called upon Member States to resist the "selective targeting of individual countries" and to avoid "double standards" (*A/C.3/61/L.31/Rev. 1, para. 4*). To be sure, many of the sponsors of that draft resolution are notorious abusers of human rights themselves and were seeking to deflect criticism of their own policies. But we find it deeply ironic that we are here, just one day after the Third Committee called

upon Member States to act with "impartiality and objectivity" (*ibid, para. 3*), discussing a highly politically motivated and biased country-specific draft resolution against a country that has for decades been the target of the General Assembly: Israel. The United States requests a recorded vote on draft resolution A/ES-10/L.19, and we will vote "no".

Once again, the General Assembly, meeting in emergency special session, has been presented with a one-sided and unbalanced draft resolution addressing the Israel-Palestinian conflict. This draft resolution, like others before it, masks an agenda that has little to do with the Israel-Palestinian conflict, which in any event is not addressed in an honest and even-handed manner. This draft resolution's deficiencies are numerous and familiar. Because the draft resolution fails to take a realistic, fair and constructive approach to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, it will fail to advance the aspirations of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples for a more secure, peaceful and prosperous life, a goal so many of us share.

Unfortunately, this type of draft resolution serves only to exacerbate tensions by serving the interests of elements hostile to Israel's inalienable and recognized right to exist. In doing so, it deepens suspicions about the United Nations that will lead many to conclude that the Organization is incapable of playing a helpful role in the region.

The challenge of advancing towards the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security requires serious and determined efforts by the parties and the constructive support of countries in the region and the international community. Regrettably, we continue to see little in the way of constructive support for genuine efforts to move towards the two-State goal.

However, in a larger sense, the United Nations must confront a more significant question, that of its relevance and utility in confronting the challenges of the twenty-first century. We believe that the United Nations is ill-served when its Members seek to transform the Organization into a forum that is little more than a self-serving and polemical attack against Israel or the United States. Moreover, the nature of group dynamics in this Organization is seriously hampering the principles on which the Organization was founded. While we know there are many who would prefer to see improved cooperation, a more effective General Assembly and the relevance of our actions to the real world, this draft resolution is another example of moderate elements being held hostage by a few extreme States or those whose parochial political agendas distort the ostensible purpose of this and other draft resolutions.

Since its inception, earlier this year, the Human Rights Council has quickly fallen into the same trap, and has delegitimized itself by focusing attention almost exclusively on Israel. Meanwhile, it has failed to address real human rights abuses in Burma, Darfur, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and other countries. Sadly, the Human Rights Council appears to be developing into an organ that is worse on this score than its predecessor.

This problem of anti-Israel bias is not unique to the Human Rights Council. It is endemic to the culture of the United Nations. It is a decades-old systemic problem that permeates the whole panoply of United Nations organizations and agencies. Beyond the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council, the sponsors of today's draft resolution have diverted the efforts of non-political United Nations bodies such as UNESCO, the International Telecommunications Union, the Universal Postal Union and the International Labour Organization with one-sided polemics that are irrelevant, and indeed harmful, to the non-political mandates of those agencies — and unhelpful to the cause of the Palestinian people and regional peace. Those efforts serve only to erode the credibility of the United Nations and to undermine the goal of resolving the underlying conflict.

The consequences of that persistent, unconstructive and biased approach are painfully clear: not one Palestinian is helped, and the United Nations continues to be discredited by its inability to confront the serious challenge of the Israel-Palestinian conflict in a serious and responsible manner. Member States must choose. Do we desire a viable United Nations system composed of agencies respected for their role in conflict resolution, human rights, economic development, education and culture, or will we continue to acquiesce in a narrow agenda of bias, stalemate and polemics? Member States must demonstrate the will to break with the past and make the United Nations a relevant voice not only for the Israel-Palestinian conflict but for other conflicts and issues worldwide.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to begin by extending to you, Madam President, my delegation's appreciation for reconvening the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly in the wake of the inaction imposed on the Security Council as a result of the abuse of the veto by the United States. This meeting of the General Assembly is indeed timely and essential to address the serious threats that the Israeli regime's carnage has posed to peace and security in the region and beyond.

The latest Israeli war campaign in Gaza, carried out through, inter alia, the shelling and air bombardment of residential areas and vital infrastructure, especially in Beit Hanoun, has led to the deaths of more than 100 civilians, many of them women and children, and the wounding of over 360. It has also wreaked havoc on residential, administrative, medical, educational and religious buildings, resulting in the aggravation of the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories.

It is necessary for this body to deal with this issue because, on 8 November, the international community was deeply appalled to learn that 19 innocent civilians, including women and children, were massacred in cold blood, with dozens of others wounded, when, in an act of State terrorism committed by the Israeli regime, their homes were shelled. That horrendous crime yet again demonstrated the determination of that regime to flout the most basic norms and principles of international law, as well as its contempt for the United Nations. It also exposed the policy of the United States to continue to provide cover for the Israeli regime's continued criminal conduct.

While the international community was impatiently awaiting resolute action by the Security Council regarding Israeli crimes in Gaza last week, and at a time when the majority of Council members were ready to take such action, another veto by the United States was cast in blatant disregard for the will and desire of the international community. Protecting the Israeli regime and providing it with cover and a shield to continue its routine but no less dangerous and criminal behaviour with total impunity entails responsibility for the multifaceted regional and international crises directly resulting from those policies and practices.

The latest United States action to torpedo the modest efforts in the Security Council should be seen in the wider context of its attitude and behaviour towards the United Nations, and towards multilateralism in general. While the United States prevents the Security Council from addressing these real threats to international peace and security, it actively pushes to crowd the agenda of the Council with fictitious concerns that serve its short-sighted interests and those of a few of its allies. It is evident that this runs counter to the interests of the overwhelming majority of the members of the international community, which the United Nations was established to serve.

It is therefore incumbent upon the international community and the General Assembly to effectively deal with the illegitimate designs, unlawful policies and atrocious crimes of the Israeli regime and to put an end to Israel's aggression and its ongoing unlawful occupation of Palestinian territory. In doing so the General Assembly should send a clear message to the Israeli regime to stop its campaign of State terrorism, aggression and occupation directed against Palestinians and others. In that context, the General Assembly should, inter alia, strongly condemn those crimes, demand the immediate cessation of the Israeli military assault against Palestinians, establish a fact-finding mission on the recent round of Israeli aggression and address the dire humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people. We, the members of this universal body, should not rest unless and until those goals are fully achieved.

It is obvious that no amount of mudslinging and recycling of baseless and tired allegations by the Israeli regime and its friends against others, including those we heard this morning and just now, will in any way manage to distract the international community's attention from the Israeli barbarism in Palestine. In the face of the persistent Israeli routine of crime and aggression, which has plunged the whole region into a protracted and growing crisis, and in view of the fact that the ill-intentioned support of the United States has rendered the Council incapable of tackling this situation, there is a need for all of us to articulate ways and means to empower the General Assembly to deal with Israeli crimes in an effective and prompt manner, and in the interest of international peace and security.

Mr. Tarragô (Brazil): Brazil cannot but express great concern at the expanding spiral of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories. It has led inevitably to the loss of many lives, mostly as a result of Israel's

disproportionate military response in northern Gaza during recent weeks. We are deeply disturbed by the countless violations of international humanitarian law that victimize the civilian population in Palestine and cause extensive destruction of Palestinian property and infrastructure.

In that connection, we deplore the deaths of more than 20 Palestinians, including many children and women, in Beit Hanoun and call for a full investigation of the incident. We welcome the decision of the Human Rights Council to establish a high-level fact-finding mission to assess the situation from the perspective of that Council. We expect Israel to carry out its own domestic investigations and to determine responsibility regarding the conduct of all its military actions.

Brazil also deplores the growing deterioration in the living conditions of the Palestinian population. According to special rapporteurs, they endure one of the most serious humanitarian crises ever to befall the region, which is unacceptable by any standards. Brazil will support all activities by the international community to mitigate the suffering of the civilian population in Palestine and calls for the prompt resumption of humanitarian assistance in the occupied territories.

The stalemate in the peace process keeps the whole region under permanent instability. We voiced our deep concern in the Security Council on 9 November (see S/PV.5564). Brazil has expressed its condemnation of all acts of violence, and in particular all forms of terrorism, on both sides. The use of force should not be perceived as a substitute for a political settlement to a conflict that clearly has no military solution. Military actions in the region have served many purposes, save that of peace.

This situation of virtual diplomatic paralysis poses a renewed challenge for the United Nations, and in particular for the Security Council. Unless prompt and concrete measures are adopted, the Organization may be faced with a full-scale crisis beyond its control. Inaction in finding a permanent solution to this intractable problem accentuates the perception of ineptitude in the eyes of the international community. Only the resumption of negotiations that involve all interested parties can result in a just and comprehensive agreement capable of paving the way for lasting peace in the Middle East.

Particular attention must be paid to the sensitive issue of the large number of Palestinian prisoners detained in Israel. It is critical, as a confidence-building measure, that the Palestinian political leaders now detained in Israel be promptly released. Furthermore, we call for the return of the abducted Israeli soldier and the setting up of conditions for achieving a durable solution to the crisis, including a halt to the launching of Qassam rockets against the Israeli population. The creation of a free, democratic and economically viable Palestinian State, in line with the legitimate aspirations of its people and as established in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), within internationally recognized borders, is a sine qua non condition for ensuring peace and stability in the Middle East.

Brazil stresses the need to put in motion a political process for the development of a strategy that, while addressing the underlying causes of the conflict, brings to fruition the vision of two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Such a strategy should take into account the Quartet Road Map, the Madrid terms of reference, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Brazil is convinced that the United Nations has the duty to offer a peaceful solution to a conflict that has such a powerful symbolic and emotional burden for so many peoples throughout the world and that has been dragging on for so long. That is why we will vote in favour of draft resolution A/ES-10/L.19, put forth by the Arab Group and other sponsors.

The international community should seize this opportunity to put the Middle East peace process back on track. In that regard, I wish to reiterate President Lula's proposal, made here at the beginning of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly (see A/61/PV.10), calling for a broad-based, United Nations-sponsored conference, with the participation of countries of the region and others that could contribute, through their capacities and successful experiences, to assisting Middle East countries and peoples to find ways to live peacefully despite their differences.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening today's meetings at the request of the League of Arab States.

Recently, the violent Israeli-Palestinian conflict has continued to escalate, as evidenced by the Beit Hanoun tragedy, which shocked the world. At the same

time, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory continues to deteriorate. We have been deeply distressed by those developments. China is very concerned at the deteriorating economic and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. China calls upon Israel to immediately end its military actions. We hope that both sides will work with the international mediating effort to avoid aggravating the situation further.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the Middle East issue. So long as a definitive solution to the question of Palestine remains out of reach, peace will never prevail in the Middle East. The parties concerned should look towards the longer-term future, in an effort to resolve the historical grievances between the Arab and Jewish peoples and to achieve the peaceful coexistence of all the countries of the region. Military strikes cannot guarantee Israel's safety and security; nor can violent attacks bring about peace for Palestine. History has proven time and again that settling disputes through political negotiations is the only proper approach to achieve lasting peace and stability in the Middle East.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict poses a major challenge for both the Middle East region and the international community at large. It not only has an impact on the level of international security and the success of the war on terror; it also jeopardizes peaceful coexistence among different civilizations and, more important, the very credibility of the United Nations. This emergency special session of the General Assembly, which we have reconvened today, is most timely. It is our hope that the United Nations can fulfil its sacred obligation to maintain international peace and security by taking practical steps without delay to prevent further bloodshed and tragedy for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and by sending a clear message to both parties to end the vicious cycle of violence for violence and to quickly return to the proper path of peace talks.

Ms. Nyamudeza (Zimbabwe): At the outset, my delegation would like to associate itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The resumption of the emergency special session of the General Assembly is an expression by the international community of its dismay at the outrageous and wanton violation of all acceptable norms and principles of international law by Israel in the occupied territories of Palestine.

The cowardly shelling of innocent civilians by the Israel Defense Force on the night of 8 November, which resulted in the loss of 19 innocent lives, mainly women and children, was as callous as it was unjustified. The attempt by Israel to explain it away as a mistake is not only insulting to the grieving people of Palestine but also abhorrent to my delegation and to all peace-loving people of the world.

My delegation is particularly saddened by the fact that, in the light of such flagrant disregard for respected norms and principles of international law by the occupying Power, Israel, one super-Power, which purports to champion democratic and just principles, opted to condone that barbaric act by casting its veto against a balanced Security Council draft resolution (S/2006/878) submitted by the delegation of Qatar. That further lends credence to our call for reform of the Security Council as it pertains to the abuse of the power of the veto. My delegation would have expected that that member of the Security Council with the power of the veto would have abided by the most elementary of moral truths, that of the principle of universality, which seeks to apply to ourselves the same standards to which we hold others, if not more stringent ones.

This is not the first time that that same member — which, ironically, is part of the Quartet — has shamelessly blocked the adoption of similar balanced and meaningful Security Council draft resolutions aimed at permanently resolving the problem of Palestine and improving the plight of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories; it has done this with frustrating regularity.

In the light of the deteriorating situation obtaining in the occupied Palestinian territories and the failure by the Security Council to adopt the fairly modest draft resolution put forth by Qatar, my delegation would like to conclude by pledging its strong support for the draft resolution before us in document A/ES-10/L.19, and urges all civilized nations present to do the same.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): As the General Assembly resumes its tenth emergency special session,

on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, my delegation takes this opportunity to express its closeness to the civilian populations suffering the consequences of recent violence. I would also like to convey the invitation of Pope Benedict XVI to join him in prayer that God will enlighten the Israeli and Palestinian authorities, as well as those nations that have a particular responsibility in the region, so that they may do all they can to put an end to the bloodshed, increase humanitarian aid initiatives and encourage the immediate resumption of direct, serious and concrete negotiations.

While regretting the new toll of deaths and condemning the spiral of violence caused by both military operations and terrorist attacks, we cannot but note that those horrendous occurrences form part of a much larger issue that, as we all know, has festered far too long in the region. Each time the Assembly holds an emergency meeting such as this, we recite the seemingly endless list of difficulties and differences separating Israelis and Palestinians, which make it all the more urgent for States to address the problem of the fundamental injustice at the heart of this question. To make a litany of symptoms without addressing the root causes is hardly helpful to either party. Each is forced to live under the horrible tensions of potential explosive acts of terror or military incursions, which result in death, casualties and the destruction of infrastructure.

The centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the persistent instability in the Middle East cannot be ignored. It is a sad fact that the international community has failed to engage Israelis and Palestinians in significant and substantive dialogue or in the resolution of disputes, in order to bring stability and peace to both. It falls squarely upon the international community to use its good offices to facilitate, with all deliberate speed, a rapprochement between the two sides.

This is a time of both urgency and opportunity: urgency because the situation is not static — rather, it is deteriorating by the minute, as the reconvening of the emergency special session testifies — and opportunity because, in addition to some favourable elements at this political juncture, civilian populations everywhere have seen and suffered the devastation of the conflict and are surely more willing than ever to strive for an honourable peace.

The only peace with a chance of lasting in the region will be a truly comprehensive one. It will involve all major players in the Middle East region and it will have to be based upon bilateral peace treaties and multilateral agreements on all questions of common concern, including issues pertaining to water, the environment and trade. To do so requires a new and all-embracing vision that will usher in concrete plans for peace.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this agenda item. Before we continue, I should like to inform members that the Fifth Committee is still considering the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/ES-10/L.19. I shall therefore suspend the meeting to enable the Committee to continue its work.

The meeting was suspended at 5.15 p.m. and resumed at 7 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I call on the representative of Qatar to introduce a revised text of draft resolution A/ES-10/L.19.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the sponsors of draft resolution A/ES-10/L.19, which was introduced this morning, I have the honour to introduce to the General Assembly revised text of the draft resolution, preliminary copies of which are now being distributed in the Hall.

One word has been omitted from paragraph 7 of the revised text; that paragraph should read as follows.

(*spoke in English*)

> "Expresses grave concern about the dire humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people, and calls for the continued provision of emergency assistance to them".

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Before we proceed with our work, I should like to draw the attention of members to the provisional report of the Fifth Committee on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/ES-10/L.19, as orally revised. The provisional report, which for the time being has been issued in English only, is now being distributed in the General Assembly Hall. It will be issued as document A/61/582 at a later date.

Before we proceed to take a decision on the draft resolution, I should like to inform the Assembly that the following countries have become sponsors of draft

resolution A/ES-10/L.19, as orally revised: Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cuba, Ghana, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Myanmar, Namibia, Pakistan, Senegal, South Africa, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/ES-10/L.19, as orally revised, which is entitled "Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Australia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

Draft resolution A/ES-10/L.19, as orally revised, was adopted by 156 votes to 7, with 6 abstentions (resolution ES-10/16).

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Before giving the floor to representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted, I should like to remind delegations that statements in explanation of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): The members of the European Union voted in favour of draft resolution A/ES-10/L.19. We very much appreciate the constructive spirit of the negotiations that resulted in a text that enabled the European Union to support the draft resolution.

The European Union underlines that an immediate cessation of violence is needed to allow for an urgent return to a comprehensive peace process in the Middle East with a clear political perspective. We reiterate our intention to actively contribute to the work within the Quartet to get the peace process urgently back on track.

The European Union strongly deplores the Israeli military action in Gaza resulting in a growing number of civilian casualties, including women and children, and deplores the unacceptable military operation in Beit Hanoun on 8 November 2006. While recognizing Israel's legitimate right to self-defence, we urge Israel to exercise the utmost restraint and underline that actions should not be disproportionate or in contradiction to international humanitarian law.

The European Union also strongly deplores the firing of rockets into Israeli territory, and calls on the Palestinian leadership to put an end to such acts. Violence is not the solution. We call for an end to violence and for restraint from all sides.

We must bear firmly in our minds the overriding goal: an early resumption of dialogue between the two parties with a view to relaunching negotiations on the basis of the Road Map, relevant Security Council resolutions and the commitments made at Sharm el-Sheikh in 2005. The European Union reiterates its continued support for Israeli and Palestinian efforts to advance the peace process.

Mr. McNee (Canada): Canada is deeply concerned about the escalation of violence and the ongoing and tragic loss of life in the Middle East. The road to peace is not through violence. Ultimately, a negotiated settlement of this conflict is the only way forward.

We know that this resolution, unlike many that come before the Assembly, includes a more accurate picture of the events and of the responsibilities of both sides. We would hope to see this approach adopted in other draft resolutions. Having said that, it is Canada's position that there already exist a number of resolutions in the General Assembly alone that deal with the conflict in the Middle East. Canada is of the view that we should seek to reduce the overall number of resolutions on the Middle East, to deal with core issues and concerns. Furthermore, we are not convinced that the establishment of a fact-finding mission on the tragic events in Beit Hanoun on 8 November would be productive, and further note that Israel has undertaken to investigate those events.

The Canadian Government therefore decided to abstain in the voting on the resolution.

Mr. Gharibi (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation voted in favour of resolution ES-10/16. However, our vote for the resolution is intended to support the cause of the Palestinian people and does not indicate a change in my Government's position on the situation in the Middle East. Nor should it be interpreted as recognition of Israel.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): On behalf of the delegation of Palestine, the Palestinian people and our leadership, I would like to thank all those who voted in favour of draft resolution A/ES-10/L.19. Such overwhelming support, with almost everyone voting in favour, with the exception of a very few, should send a very significant message, especially to the Israeli delegation, which insulted all of us in its statement delivered earlier by disrespecting and disregarding the collective wish of the international community. We sincerely hope that they conclude from this additional lesson that they cannot act above international law. They must comply with the law. If they want to be respected members within the United Nations system like all the rest of us, they have to abide by the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law, especially those of international humanitarian law.

Tonight the Assembly has sent our people a very powerful message: that the cause of justice is a very strong cause in the General Assembly Hall. I am confident and certain that this vote will give the Palestinian people some small hope in the right direction: that one of these days their national rights will be realized, occupation will end and they will become a free independent nation living side by side with Israel. We hope that day will come very soon. We are sure that, with the help of the General Assembly and the struggle and steadfastness of our people, that day will come very soon.

Mr. Carmon (Israel): Before I start, I just want to say that I had indicated that I wanted to raise a point of order, but the President did not notice. I wanted to make a brief comment, not out of disrespect or in an effort to insult, but on the basis of procedure. I think that we have dealt with procedure for most of today; we have been dealing with misusing procedure in order, I must repeat, to highjack the Assembly into adopting this resolution. I would just like to make a brief comment. We feel that there is no place for a non-voting observer mission to make remarks during the time allocated for explanations of vote, because they do not vote. They have sufficient time and place to make their remarks, but not during explanations of vote. That is the procedural remark I wanted to make.

Another remark I must make to the respected observer of the PLO to the United Nations is that Israel or our Mission, Government and people have never had any intention or wish to insult the people of Palestine or the Palestinian Authority. What we do not respect is terrorism; we do not respect those who fight us. We are

fighting back within our fundamental right to self-defence. We will continue to fight back against terrorism. The problem is not what we have seen here; the problem is not what is written in the resolution. The problem is the situation on the ground.

I must add that, because what we see taking place here does not really reflect what is happening on the ground, we hope and pray very soon to be able to report to the Assembly on what is happening on the ground between us and the Palestinians — not what is happening at the United Nations in New York, but in the real world. On the ground, we really hope that very soon we will be able to get together and to solve the problems between us and our neighbours without — sometimes — interference from the outside, which is not really helpful.

It is surely no surprise to anyone that today's resumption of the emergency special session has been conducted almost as business as usual — as it is usual here at the United Nations. It delivered what it promised: a parade of theatrics, dramatic speeches oblivious to reality and harsh exchanges of words and accusations, all resulting in the passage of another resolution condemning Israel for simply fighting for its survival.

Let there be no mistake: Israel has great respect for the Assembly and the noble principles for which it stands. It is precisely because of that respect that we cannot but be dismayed that harmful and politicized interests too often seek to gain control of this body's mandate and its activities.

We have much to say about the resolution that has been adopted. Of course, we are not going to enter into that. But I would like to make a brief comment with regard to something that bothers us a great deal, to say the least. For the sake of a supposedly moderate text, in this resolution the international community and the General Assembly have equated actions of terrorism, which are usually condemned by the international community, with the actions taken by Israel in self-defence to fight terrorism. That is something that the resolution deplored; but let me tell the Assembly that Israel deplores what is written in the resolution.

Sadly, the Assembly has missed yet another opportunity to make a relevant contribution to the cause of peace, by pandering to Member States that seek to demonize Israel by focusing on the response to terrorism but not on terror itself, and, as I said before, by equating terrorism with the legitimate right to fight terrorism. A resolution like this cannot but embolden the true enemies of peace and of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples alike.

In not addressing the responsibility of the Palestinian leadership to fulfil its responsibility to curb terror and violence against Israel, the Assembly has written the terrorists a blank cheque to carry on as they please.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Before giving the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, who has asked for the floor in the exercise of the right of reply, I would like to remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats. I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): With their positive votes, 156 delegations have spoken out today to defend Palestine, whose delegation Israel has tried to prevent from taking the floor in the General Assembly. We very much hope that the delegation of Israel will draw lessons from this and change its way of thinking with regard to positive cooperation with the international community. We also hope that Israel will understand the will of the international community, which is attempting to protect the Palestinian people from Israel's war machine and occupation forces.

We are meeting here today as representatives of the international community for perhaps the thousandth time since the establishment of the Organization and the beginning of the Arab-Israeli conflict to discuss the question of Palestine. We are here again to determine how we can strengthen the cause of peace, and to ask Israel, the occupying Power, to end its forces' crimes and collective punishment against the defenceless Palestinian people. We the peoples of the United Nations have resolved in the preamble of the Charter to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. We have voted in favour of hundreds of resolutions calling on Israel to end its occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories. As the international community, we have heard with strong indignation and condemnation the Hollywood-style warning that the representative of Israel dared to make in the Assembly, threatening the Members of the United Nations and

accusing them of supporting terrorism and being complicit in it for having voted in favour of this resolution, thereby also accusing the majority of them of supporting terrorism and working with terrorists. By that convoluted logic and distortion of facts, States supporting a resolution condemning the terrorism of the State of Israel are thereby preventing the Palestinian people from establishing an independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital.

The unrealistic analyses we periodically hear from Israel's representatives transcend time and reality.

Israel makes desperate failed attempts to convince everyone that the suffering of the Palestinian people began just 15 months ago, following the holding of legitimate elections by the Palestinian people. It wants us to believe that the unilateral withdrawal of its forces from the Gaza Strip ended the occupation and that it has stopped building new settlements. Israel would also have us believe that the launching of a few rockets into Israeli villages is preventing children from sleeping, and that the capture of an Israeli soldier, who was shooting at Palestinian civilians, is a flagrant violation of international law.

Surely the reason for the current state of affairs is Israel's massacres, suppression and siege, its building of the separation wall, its construction and expansion of settlements, its Judaization of Palestine, its State terrorism, its targeting of children in playgrounds, its detention of cabinet ministers, its cruel policies against the Palestinian people, its launching of rockets and its daily bombardment of Palestinians. We need to understand that Israel's arrogance and distortion of facts merited the adoption of a resolution condemning Israel, which has accused the international community of sponsoring terrorism and which pretends that it is the only dove of peace in the world.

The victims of Israeli State terrorism are not just Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians and other Arabs; there are also victims in other countries who have been assassinated by the Israeli "dove of peace" for denouncing injustice, occupation, collective punishment and massacres in the occupied Arab territories. The victims include, for example, members of United Nations peacekeeping forces; Count Bernadotte, the first United Nations mediator in the Middle East; and Europeans and Americans crushed by bulldozers for daring to protest the confiscation of Palestinian land. Lebanese and Syrian women and children have also been Israel's victims in their homes and villages, as well as Palestinians blown apart by Israeli mines.

Peace is not a market open to speculators gambling on the stability of the Middle East. Peace is above all a matter of international political will. When the desire for peace is present in the Israeli Government, in its political parties and in its policies, there will be no need for us to meet here. More than anything else, peace is a question of policy and real political will.

The holding of three special sessions of the Human Rights Council in less than a year was surely a clear indication that the policy of Israeli occupation and aggression has weighed heavily on the international conscience. Preventing the Security Council from meeting its responsibility to maintain international peace and security and from protecting Palestinian civilians has fuelled Israel's murderous policy in the occupied Palestinian territories. It is for that reason that the international effort towards peace has waned. The Madrid terms of reference have not been respected; nor have the various international resolutions adopted in recent years, or the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative.

Peace is an international political responsibility. It is a need of people aspiring to a better future. Peace cannot be established while Israel continues to hide behind a country claiming to be a super-Power. Occupying forces must withdraw. There must be recognition of the fact that life is a precious gift given equally to everyone. No one is better than anyone else. All people are equal in life and in death.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): We have heard the only speaker in the exercise of the right of reply.

In accordance with the provisions of the final paragraph of resolution ES-10/16, which we have just adopted, I shall now adjourn the tenth emergency special session temporarily.

The meeting rose at 7.35 p.m.